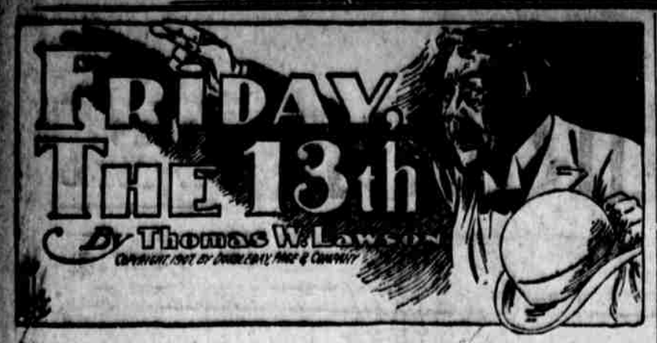

I was not surprised to see Bob's tall form wedged in the crowd about two-thirds of the way from the center. Every other active floor member was there, too. Even Ike Bloomenstein and Joe Barnes, who seldom went into the big crowds, were on hand, perhaps to catch a flier for their Thanksgiving turkey money, perhaps to get as near the killing as possible. Bob was not trading, although on the day before, he never took his eye off Barry Conant. I said to myself: "He is trying to fathom Barry Conant's movements," but for what purpose puzzled me. The hands of the big clock on the wall showed that trading had been 30 minutes under way, and still Barry Conant was pushing up the price. His voice had just rung out "25 for any part of 5,000" when, like an echo, it sounded through the hall: "Sold." It was Bob. He had worked his way to the center of the crowd and stood in front of Barry Conant. He was not the Bob who had taken Barry Conant's gaff that afternoon a few weeks before. I never saw him cooler, calmer, more self-possessed. He was the incarnation of confident power. A cold, cynical smile played around the corners of his mouth as he looked down upon his opponent.

The effect upon Barry Conant was different from that of Bob's last bid on the day when Beulah Sands' hopes went skyward in dust. It did not rouse in him the wild, furious desire for the onslaught that he showed then, but seemed to quicken his alert, prolific mind to exercise all its cunning. I think that in that one moment Barry Conant recalled his suspicions of the day before, when he had wondered what Bob's presence in the crowd meant, and that he saw again the picture of Bob on the day when he himself had ditched Bob's treasure-train. He hesitated for just the fraction of a second, while he waved with lightning-like rapidity a set of finger signals to his lieutenants. Then he squared himself for the encounter. "25 for 5,000." Cold, cold as the voice of a condemning judge rang Bob's "Sold." "25 for 5,000." "Sold." "25 for 5,000." "Sold." Their eyes were fixed upon each other, in Barry's a defiant glare, in Bob's mingled pity and contempt. The rest of the brokers hushed their own bids and offers until it could have truthfully been said that the floor of the stock exchange was quiet, an almost unheard-of thing in like circumstances. Again Barry Conant's voice, "25 for 5,000." "Sold." "25 for 5,000." "Sold." Barry Conant had met his master. Whether it was that for the first time in all his wonderful career he realized that the "system" was to meet its Nemesis, or what the cause, none could tell, perhaps not even Barry Conant himself, but some emotion caused his olive face for an instant to turn pale, and give his voice a tell-tale quiver. Once more pealed forth "25 for 5,000." That Bob saw the pallor, that he caught the quiver, was evident to all, for the instant his "sold" rang out, he followed it with 5,000 at 24, 23, 22, 20." Neither Barry Conant nor any of his lieutenants got in a "take it;" although whether they wanted to or not was an open question until Bob allowed his voice to dwell just like a pendulum swing of time on the 20. It was as if he were tantalizing them into sticking by their guns. By the time he paused, Barry Conant's nerve was back, for his piercing "Take it" had linked to it "20 for any part of $10,000." The bid was yet on his lips when Bob's deep voice rang out "Sold." Any part of 25,000 at 19, 18, 15, 10." Hell was now loose. Back and forth, up against the rail, around the room and back and around again, the crowd surged for 15 of the wildest, craziest minutes in the history of the New York stock exchange, a history replete with records of wild and crazy scenes.

At last from sheer exhaustion there came a ten minutes' lull, which was used in comparing trades. At the beginning of the respite Sugar was selling at 155, for in that quarter hour of madness it had broken from 210 to 155, but when the ten minutes had elapsed, the stock had worked back to 167. Barry Conant had again taken the center of the crowd, after hastily scanning the brief notes handed him by messenger-boys and giving orders to his lieutenants. He had evidently received reenforcements in the form of renewed orders from his principals. Many of the faces that fringed the inner circle of that crowd were frightful to look upon, some white as though just lifted from hospital pillows, others red to the verge of apoplexy—all strained as though awaiting the coming of the jury with a life or death verdict. They all knew that Bob had sold more than a hundred thousand shares of Sugar upon which the profits must be more than $4,000,000. Would he resume selling, or was he through? Was it short stock, which must be bought back, or long stock; and if long, whose stock? Were the insiders selling out on one another, or were they all selling together, and under cover of Barry Conant's movements were Camemeyer and "Standard Oil" emptying their bag preparatory to the slaughter of the Washington contingent? All these questions were rushing through the heads of that crowd of brokers like steam through a boiler, now hot, now cold, but always at high pressure, for upon the correctness of the answer depended the fortune of many who breathlessly awaited the renewal or the suspension of the contest. Even Barry Conant's usually impassive face wore a tinge of anxiety.

Indeed, Bob was the only one in the center of that throng that showed no sign of what was going on behind it. The same cynical smile that had been there since the opening still played around the corners of his mouth as he squared himself in front of his opponent. All knew now that he was not through. Barry Conant had evidently decided to force the

Bob Brownley Hung Close to the Sugar-Pole All Day.

fighting, although more cautiously than before. "67 for a thousand." One of his lieutenants bid 67 for 500, another 67 for 300, and as Bob had not yet shown his intention of meeting their bids, 67 for different amounts was heard all over the house. Bob might have been tossing a metal coin to decide the advisability of buying back what he had sold; he might have been adding up the bids as they were made. He said nothing for a fraction of a minute, which to those tortured men must have seemed like an age. Then with a wave of his hand, as though delivering a benediction, he swept the circle with a cold-blooded: "Sold the lots, 5,600 in all."

"Sixty-seven for a thousand"—again Barry Conant's bid. "Sold." "67 for 5,000." "Sold." "66 for a thousand." "Sold." The drop from 5,000 to 1,000 and a dollar a share in Barry Conant's bids was the mortally wounded, but still game general's "Sound the Retreat." Bob heard it. "Any part of 10,000 at 65, 64, 62, 60." The din was now as fierce as before. The entire crowd, all but Barry Conant and his lieutenants, seemed to have concluded that Bob's renewal of attack meant that he was the winning side, and those who had been hanging on to their stock hoping against hope, and those who were short and had been undecided whether to cover or to hold on and sell more for greater profits, vied with one another in a frantic effort to sell. All could now feel the coming panic. All could see that it was a bad one, as the least informed on the floor knew that there was a tremendous amount of Sugar stock in the hands of Washington novices at speculation and of others who had bought it at high prices. Sugar was now dropping two, three, five dollars a share between trades, and the panic was spreading to the other poles, as is always the case, for when there are sudden large losses in one stock, the losers must throw over the other stocks they hold to meet their loss, and thus the whole structure tumbles like a house of cards. Sugar had just crossed 110 when the loud bang of the president's gavel resounded through the room. Instantly there was a silence as of death. All knew the meaning of the sound, the most ominous ever heard in a stock exchange, calling for the temporary suspension of business while the president announces the failure of some member or house.

PERKINS, BLANCHARD & CO. Announce that They Cannot Meet Their Obligations.

This statement that one of the oldest houses had been swamped in the crash Bob had started caused further frantic selling, and, as though every member had employed the lull to refill his lungs, a howl rose that pealed and wailed to the dome.

I watched Bob closely; in fact, it was impossible for me to take my eyes off him; he seemed absolutely unmindful of the agonizing shrieks about him, for the frenzied brokers were no longer crying their bids or offers, but screaming them. He still continued relentlessly to hammer Sugar, offering it in thousands and tens of thousand lots.

Again and again the gavel fell, and again and again an announcement of failure was followed by blood-curdling howls. When Sugar struck 80—not 180, but plain 80—it seemed that the last day of stock speculation was at hand. Announcements were being made every few minutes of the failure of this bank, the closing of the doors of that trust company. Where would it end? What power could stop this Niagara of molten dollars? Suddenly above the tumult rose Bob Brownley's voice. He must have been standing on his tiptoes. His hands were raised aloft. He seemed to tower a head above the mob. His voice was still clear and unimpaired by the terrible strain of the past two hours. To that mob it must have sounded like the trumpet of the delivering angel. "80 for any part of 25,000 Sugar." Instantly Sugar was hurled at him from all sides of the crowd. He was the only buyer of the moment who had appeared since Sugar broke 125. Barry Conant and his lieutenants had disappeared like snowflakes at the opening of the door of the firebox of a locomotive speeding through the storm. In a few seconds Bob had been sold all the 25,000 he had bid for. Again his voice rang out: "80 for 25,000." The sellers momentarily halted. He got only a few thousand of his 25. "85 for 25,000." A few thousand more. "90 for $25,000." Still fewer thousands. His bidding was beginning to tell on the mob. A cry ran through the room into the crowds around the poles: "Brownley has turned!"—and taking renewed courage at the report, the bulls rallied their forces and began to bid for the different stocks, which a moment before it had seemed that no one wanted at any price.

In a chip of a minute the whole scene changed; there was almost as wild a panic on the up side as there had been on the down. Bob Brownley continued buying Sugar until he had pushed it above 150. He then went about tallying up his trades. At the end of ten minutes' calculation he returned to the center and bought 11,000 shares more; coming out, his eye caught mine.

"Jim, have you been here long?"

"An eternity. I was here at the opening and I pray God never to put me through another two hours like the past two. It seems a hideous dream, a nightmare. Bob, in the name of God, what have you been doing?"

He gave me a wild, awful look of exultation. Sublime triumph shone in those blazing brown orbs, triumph such as I had never seen in the eyes of man.

"Jim Randolph, I have been giving Wall street and its hell 'system' a dose of its own poison, a good full-measure dose. They planned by harvesting a fresh crop of human hearts and souls on the bull side to give Friday the 13th a new meaning. Tradition says Friday the 13th is Bear Saints' day. I believe in maintaining old traditions, so I have harvested their hearts instead. I will tell you about it some time, Jim, but now I must see Beulah Sands. Jim Randolph, I've saved her and her father. I've made them a round three millions and a strong seven millions for myself."

He almost yelled it as he rushed away and left me dazed, stupefied. A moment, and I came to. Something urged me to follow him.

CHAPTER VI.

As I passed through my office a few minutes later I heard Bob's voice in Beulah Sands' office. It was raised in passionate eloquence.

"Yes, Beulah, I have done it single-handed. I have crucified Camemeyer, 'Standard Oil,' and the 'system' that spiked me to the cross a few weeks ago. You have three millions, and I have seven. Now there is nothing more but for you to go home to your father, and then come back to me. Back to me, Beulah, back to me to be my wife!"

He stopped. There was no sound. I waited; then, frightened, I stepped to the door of Beulah Sands' office. Bob was standing just inside the threshold, where he had halted to give her the glad tidings. She had risen from her desk and was looking at him with an agonized stare. He seemed to be transfixed by her look, the wild ecstasy of the outburst of love yet mirrored in his eyes. She was just saying as I reached the door:

"Bob, in mercy's name tell me you got this money fairly, honorably."

Bob must have realized for the first time what he had done. He did not speak. He only stared into her eyes. She was now at his side.

"Bob, you are unnerved," she said; "you have been through a terrible ordeal. For an hour I have been reading in the bulletins of the banks and trust companies that have failed, of the banking houses that have been ruined. I have been reading that you did it; that you have made millions—and I knew it was for me, for father, but in the midst of my joy, my gratitude, my love—for, oh, Bob, I love you," she interrupted herself passionately; "it seems as though I love you beyond the capacity of a human heart to love. I think that for the right to be yours for one single moment of this life I would smilingly endure all the pains and miseries of eternal torture. Yes, Bob, for the right to have you call me yours for only while I heard the words, I would do anything, Bob, anything that was honorable."

She had drawn his head down close to her face, and her great blue eyes searched his as though they would go to his very soul. She was a child in her simple appeal for him to allow her to see his heart, to see that there was nothing black there.

As she gazed her beautiful hands played through his hair as do a mother's through that of the child she is soothing in sickness.

"Bob, speak to me, speak to me," she begged, "tell me there was no dishonor in the getting of those millions. Tell me no one was made to suffer as my father and I have suffered. Tell me that the suicides and the convicts, the daughters dragged to shame and the mothers driven to the madhouse as a result of this panic, cannot be charged to anything unfair or dishonorable that you have done. Bob, oh, Bob, answer! Answer no, or my heart will break; or if, Bob, you have made a mistake, if you have done that which in your great desire to aid me and my father seemed justifiable, but which you now see was wrong, tell it to me, Bob, dear, and together we will try to undo it. We will try to find a way to atone. We will give the millions to the last, last penny to those upon whom you have brought misery. Father's loss will not matter. Together we will go to him and tell him what we have done, what we have lived through, tell him of our mistake, and in our agony he will forget his own. For such a horror has my father of anything dishonorable that he will embrace his misery as happiness when he knows that his teachings have enabled his daughter to undo this great wrong. And then, Bob, we will be married, and you and I and father and mother will be together, and be, oh, so happy, and we will begin all over again."

"Beulah, stop; in the name of God, in the name of your love for me, don't say another word. There is a limit to the capacity of a man to suffer, even if he be a great, strong brute like myself, and, Beulah, I have rerached that limit. The day has been a hard one."

His voice softened and became as a tired child's.

"I must go into the hustle of the street, into the din and sound, and get down my nerves and get back my head. Then I shall be able to think clear and true, and I will come back to you, and together we will see if I have done anything that makes me unfit to touch the cheek and the hands and the lips of the best and most beautiful woman God ever put upon earth. Beulah, you know I would not deceive you to save my body from the fires of this world, and my soul from the torture of the damned, and I promise you that if I find that I have done wrong, what you call wrong, what your father would call wrong, I will do what you say to atone."

He took her hand between his hands, gently, reverently, and touching his lips to her glorious golden hair, he went away.

Beulah Sands turned to me. "Please, Mr. Randolph, go with him. He is souldazed. One can never tell what a heart sorely perplexed will prompt its owner to do. Often in the night when I have got myself into a fever from thinking of my father's situation, I have had awful temptations. The agents of the devil seek the wretched when none of those they love are by. I have often thought some of the blackest tragedies of the earth might have been averted if there had been a true friend to stand at the wrung one's elbow at the fatal minute of decision and point to the sun behind, just when the black ahead grew unendurable. Please follow Mr. Brownley than you may be ready, should his awakening to what he has done become unbearable. Tell him the dreaded morrows are never as terrible actually as they seem in anticipation."

I overtook Bob just outside the office. I did not speak to him, for I realized that he was in no mood for company. I dropped in behind, determined that I would not lose sight of him. It was almost one o'clock. Wall street was at its meridian of frenzy, every one on a wild rush. The day's doings had packed the always crowded money lane. The newsboys were shouting afternoon editions. "Terrible panic in Wall street. One man against millions. Robert Brownley broke 'the street.' Made twenty millions in an hour. Bank failed. Wreck and ruin everywhere. President Snow of Asterfield National a suicide." Bob gave no sign of hearing. He strode with a slow, measured gait, his head erect, his eyes staring ahead, a man thinking, thinking, thinking for his salvation. Many hurrying men looked at him, some with an expression of unutterable hatred, as though they wanted to attack him. Then again there were those who called him by name with a laugh of joy; and some turned to watch him in curiosity. It was easy to pick the wounded from those who shared in his victory, and from those who knew the frenzied finance buzz-saw only by its buzz. Boz saw none. Where could he be going? He came to the head

He Seemed Absolutely Unmindful of the Agonizing Shriek About Him.

of the street of coin and crime and crossed Broadway. His path was blocked by the fence surrounding old Trinity's churchyard. Grasping the pickets in either hand he stared at the crumbling headstones of those guardsmen of Mammon who once walked the earth and fought their heart battles, as he was walking and fighting, but who now knew no ten o'clock, no three, who looked upon the stock-gamblers and dollar-trailers as they looked upon the worms that honeycombed their headstones' bases. What thoughts went through Bob Brownley's mind only his Maker knew. For minutes he stood motionless, then he walked down Broadway. He went into the Battery. The benches were crowded with that jetsam and flotsam of humanity that New York's mighty sewers throw in armies upon her inland beaches at every sunrise. Here a sodden brute sleeping off a prolonged debauch, there a lad whose frankness of face and homespun clothes and bewildered eyes spelt "from the farm and mother's watchful love." On another bench an Italian woman who had a half-dozen future dollar kings and social queens about her, and whose clothes told of the immigrant ship just into port. Bob Brownley apparently saw none. But suddenly he stopped. Upon a bench sat a sweet-faced mother holding a sleeping babe in her arms, while a curly-pated boy nestled his head in her lap and slept through the magic lanes and fairy woods of dreamland. The woman's face was one of those that blend the confidence of girlhood with the uncertainty of womanhood. 'Twas a pretty face, which had been plainly tagged by its Maker for a light-hearted trip through the world, but it had been seared by the iron of the city.

"Mr. Brownley—" She started to rise.

He gently pushed her back with a "hush," unwilling to rob the sleepers of their heaven.

"What are you doing here, Mrs. ——?" He halted.

"Mrs. Chase. Mr. Brownley, when I went away from Randolph & Randolph's office I married John Chase; you may remember him as a delivery clerk. I had such a happy home and my husband was good; I did not have to typewrite any longer. These are our two children."

"What are you doing here?"

The tears sprang to her eyes; she dropped them, but did not answer.

"Don't mind me, woman. I, too, have hidden hells I don't want the world to see. Don't mind me; tell me your story. It may do you good; it may do me good; yes, it may do me good."

I had dropped into a seat a few feet away. Both were too much occupied with their own thoughts to notice me or any one else. I could not overhear their conversation, but long afterward, when I mentioned our old stenographer, Bessie Brown, to Bob, he told me of the incident at the Battery. Her husband, after their marriage, had become infected with the stock-gambling microbe, the microbe that gnaws into its victim's mind and heart day and night, while ever fiercer grows the "get rich, get rich" fever. He had plunged with their savings and had drawn a blank. He had lost his position in disgrace and had landed in the bucket-shop, the sub-cellar pit of the big stock exchange hell. From there a week before he had been sent to prison for theft, and that morning she had been turned into the street by her landlord. I saw Bob take from his pocket his memorandum-book, write something upon a leaf, tear it out and hand it to the woman, touch his hat, and before she could stop him, stride away. I saw her look at the paper, clap her hands to her forehead, look at the paper again and at the retreating form of Bob Brownley. Then I saw her, yes, there in the old Battery park, in the drizzling rain and under the eyes of all, drop upon her knees in prayer. How long she prayed I do not know. I only know that as I followed Bob I looked back and the woman was still upon her knees. I thought at the time how queer and unnatural the whole thing seemed. Later, I learned to know that nothing is queer and unnatural in the world of human suffering; that great human suffering turns all that is queer and unnatural into commonplace. Next day Bessie Brown came to our office to see Bob. Not being able to get at him she asked for me.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Growl from the Cynic.

The friend in need is generally a friend too many.